

Emerging or Submerging?

by Brian Brodersen

The Emerging Movement challenges traditional Christian doctrine and authority, emphasizing a more fluid and subjective understanding of truth and faith.

Scripture: Matthew 7:15, John 8:32, 2 Corinthians 11:3, Galatians 1:6, Colossians 2:8, 1 Timothy 4:1, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 2:1, 1 John 4:1, Jude 1:3

Topics: "Postmodern Theology", "Christian Apologetics"

Description

Brian Brodersen discusses the contrast between modernism and postmodernism, highlighting how postmodernism rejects the concept of absolute truth and emphasizes subjective experience and tolerance. He delves into the Emergent movement's postmodern views, particularly focusing on Rob Bell's reinterpretation of Christian doctrines like the Trinity, Virgin Birth, Resurrection, and the Bible. Brodersen addresses the Emergents' emphasis on social justice and their liberal beliefs, cautioning against the dangers of straying from the foundational truths of Christianity and the quest for absolute truth.

Transcript

Col 2:8

If we are going to understand the emerging movement we have to have some understanding of postmodernism. Postmodernism is a philosophical perspective on life that is to a large degree a reaction to modernism. Modernism says, truth can be found in reason and science. Postmodernism says, truth cannot be found because there is no such thing as absolute truth. Postmodernism is not only after modernism it is against modernism.

"In general, modernism proclaims the autonomy of the human reason, especially in the cold objectivity of science, whereas postmodernism prefers the warmth of subjective experience. Modernism is committed to the quest for truth, believing that certainty is

attainable; postmodernism is committed to pluralism, affirming the equal validity of all ideologies, and tolerance as the supreme virtue, Modernism declares the inevitability of social progress: postmodernism pricks the bubble of utopian dreams. Modernism exalts self-centered individualism; but postmodernism seeks the togetherness of community. Modernism is supremely self-confident, often guilty of arrogant ambition, whereas postmodernism is humble enough to question everything, for it lacks confidence in anything". Stott

"Postmodernity, in contrast to modernity, rejects any notion of objective truth and insist that the only absolute in the universe is that there are no absolutes. Tolerance is the supreme virtue and exclusivity the supreme vice. Truth is not grounded in reality or in any sort of authoritative "text", but is simply constructed by the mind of the individual (or socially constructed).

Nothing is more important in the comprehension of postmodernism than its convoluted, incredible view of language.

"Postmodernist base this new relativism and the view that all meaning is socially constructed on a particular view of language. This set of theories about language can be referred to as 'deconstruction'... Postmodernist theories begin with the assumption that language cannot render truths about the world in an objective way. Language, by its very nature, shapes what we think. Since language is a cultural creation, meaning is ultimately (again) a social construction".

The EMERGENTS are unashamedly postmodern and are against those they believe to be modernist. Because historically, evangelical have believed that there is absolute truth that one can know for certain found in the Bible, they are considered modernist and therefore enemies. One of the ironies of the EMERGENTS is their intolerance and utter disdain for those of us who believe in the inerrancy of Scripture and the exclusivity of Jesus Christ as Savior.

Rob Bell will be our case study. His book Velvet Elvis is subtitled repainting the

Christian faith.

I embrace the need to keep painting, to keep reforming. By this I do not mean cosmetic, superficial changes like better lights and music, shaper graphics, and new methods with easy to follow steps. I mean theology; the beliefs about God, Jesus, the Bible, Salvation, the future. We must keep reforming the way the Christian faith is defined, lived and explained... I am part of a community, a movement of people who have been living, exploring, discussing, sharing and experiencing new understandings of Christian faith.

Rob Bell's trampoline illustration-

Trampoline springs- the doctrines of the Christian faith. "The springs aren't God. The springs aren't Jesus. They are not the point".

1. The Trinity- "This three in oneness understanding of God emerged in the several hundred years after the resurrection... It is a spring, and people jumped for thousands of years without it... Once again, the springs aren't God. They have emerged over time as people have discussed and studied and experienced and reflected on their growing understanding of who God is. Our words aren't absolutes. Only God is absolute, and God has no intention of sharing this absoluteness with anything, especially words that people have come up with to talk about him".

2. The Virgin Birth- "What if tomorrow someone digs up definitive proof that Jesus had a real earthly biological father named Larry, and archeologist find Larry's tomb and do DNA samples and prove beyond a shadow of a doubt hat the virgin birth was really just a bit of mythologizing the Gospel writers threw in to appeal to the followers of the Mithra and Dionysian religious cults that were hugely popular at the time of Jesus, whose gods had virgin births? But what if as you study the origin of the word virgin, you discover that the word virgin in the gospel of Matthew actually comes from the book of Isaiah, and then you find out that in the Hebrew language at that time, the word virgin could mean several things. And

what if you discover that in the first century being "born of a virgin" also referred to a child whose mother became pregnant the first time she had intercourse? What if that spring was seriously questioned? Could a person keep jumping? Could a person still love God? Could you still be a Christian? Is the way of Jesus still the best possible way to live? If the whole faith falls apart then it wasn't very strong in the first place, was it? ... God is bigger than the Christian faith (doctrine-springs).

3. The Resurrection- "It's important to remember that we rarely find these first Christians trying to prove that the resurrection actually occurred... One reason is: Everybody's god in the first century had risen from the dead. To claim a resurrection had occurred was nothing new... To try to prove there was an empty tomb wouldn't have gotten very far with the average citizen of the Roman Empire; they had heard it all before. This is why so many passages about the early church deal with possessions and meals and generosity. They understood that people are rarely persuaded by arguments, but more often by experiences".

4. The Bible- "The Christian faith is mysterious to the core. It is about things and beings that ultimately can't be put into words. Language fails. And if we do definitively put God into words, we have at that very moment made God something God is not... When Jesus said, 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven' whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven etc... He is giving his followers the authority make new interpretations of the Bible. He is giving them permission to say, 'Hey we think we missed it before on that verse, and we've recently come to the conclusion that this is what it actually means... It is poems and stories and letters and accounts. It is people interacting with other people in actual space and time. It is God interacting with people in actual space and time. We cannot ignore this. To take statements made in a letter from one person living in a real place at a moment in history writing to another person

living in a real place out of their context and apply them to today without first understanding their original context sucks the life right out of them. They aren't isolated statements that float, unattached, out in space. They aren't first and foremost timeless truths...I think the Bible is the most amazing, beautiful, deep, inspired, engaging collection of writings ever... But sometimes when I hear people quote the Bible, I just want to throw up... In many Christian settings, people are encouraged to read the Bible alone, which is a new idea in church history. I don't think that any writers of the Bible ever intended people to read their letters alone... The Bible is a communal book. It came from people writing in communities, and it was often written to communities... When you hear people say they are just going to tell you what the Bible means, it is not true. They are telling you what they think it means. They are giving you their opinions about the Bible... To think I can just read the Bible without reading any of my own culture or background or issues into it and come out with a "pure" or "exact" meaning is not only untrue, but it leads to a very destructive reading of the Bible that robs it of its life and energy".

5. Heaven and Hell- For Jesus the question wasn't, how do I get to heaven, but how do I bring heaven to earth? ...What's disturbing then is when people talk more about hell after life than they do about hell here and now... True spirituality then is not about escaping this world to some other place where we will be forever... the goal isn't escaping this world, but making this world the kind of place God can come to... to make the cross of Jesus just about human salvation is to miss that God is interested in the saving of everything. Every star and rock and bird...the most powerful things happen when the church surrenders its desire to convert people... the church must stop thinking about everybody primarily in categories of in or out, saved or not, believer or nonbeliever... Jesus commanded us to love our neighbor".

For millions of young adults who have recently dropped out of church, Christianity is a failed religion. Why? Because it has specialized in dealing with 'spiritual needs' to the exclusion of physical and social needs. It has focused on 'me and 'my eternal destiny,' but is has failed to address the dominant societal and global realities of their lifetime; systemic injustice, poverty, and dysfunction." Brian McLaren

Response-

1. Emergents are reviving the social gospel of the early 20th century.

2. Emergents are promoting liberal views that have long ago been proven false.

Historian Edwin Yamauchi has examined the entire matter on several occasions and considers groundless the case for any significant Mithraic influence on Roman society.

His conclusion is that there is no evidence of the penetration of Mithra into the West until the end of the first century AD.

3. Emergents have bought the liberal agenda hook, line and sinker.

a. The church has had an evil influence on the world: The Crusades, The Inquisition, Slavery, Oppression of Women, Suppression of Sexual Freedom, Trashing the Planet etc.

b. All roads lead to God and all religions are just various expressions of faith in the same God.

c. Good people go to heaven.

d. We cannot know absolute truth.

4. Emergents are looking to convert you!

Close: Jesus said, If you abide in my word you are my disciples indeed, and you shall KNOW the TRUTH and the TRUTH shall make you free.

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